

What is claimed:

1. A method for mapping intellectual property, comprising:

searching one or more remote databases for one or more relevant patents; and  
performing a network analysis on the relevant patents.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising

receiving as a query one or more keywords or assignees to be searched;  
searching the query in Issued Patent or Published Application databases;  
retrieving cited prior art patents for each patent found in search results;  
updating the query by adding assignees from the cited prior art patents; and  
running a second search using the updated query.

3. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

for each patent, creating spring relationship among patents based on number of  
citation of patent prior art; and  
generating a spring mass diagram.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising clusterizing patents according to word  
similarity.

5. The method of claim 1, further comprising generating a visualization of the patents for  
display on a screen or plotting on a large format plotter.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising three-dimensionally visualizing the patents on a 3D display device.

7. The method of claim 1, further comprising allowing a user to review the search result and revise the query.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising caching results from prior IP maps in a remote computer.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising retrieving a cached IP map in response to a user request.

10. The method of claim 8, further comprising periodically flushing cached IP maps to ensure a fresh IP map.

11. The method of claim 1, further comprising distributing a search over a plurality of client computers.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein one of the client computers is located behind a firewall, further comprising bypassing the firewall in sending distributed search results to a remote computer.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising annotating a patent at a local computer and caching the annotated patent at a remote computer to satisfy a subsequent request for said patent.

14. A method for mapping intellectual property, comprising:

- (a) receiving as a query one or more keywords or assignees to be searched;
- (b) searching the query in Issued Patent or Published Application databases;
- (c) retrieving cited prior art for each patent found as search results;
- (d) updating the query by adding assignees from the cited prior art; and
- (e) iteratively repeating (b)-(d) using the updated query.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising network analyzing the search results.

16. A system for mapping intellectual property, comprising:

- means for searching one or more remote databases for one or more relevant patents; and
- means for performing a network analysis on the relevant patents.

17. The system of claim 16, further comprising means for generating a computer-readable intellectual property mapping file.

18. The system of claim 17, wherein the IP mapping file comprises:

a collection of patent documents, each having one or more links embedded in the first portion referencing one or more external documents viewable using a viewer application; and one or more links embedded in the third portion referencing information contained in the second portion; and

links generated by a network analysis of relationships among the patent documents.

19. A computer readable media containing executable computer program instructions which when executed on a digital processing system causes the system to perform a method comprising:

receiving as a query one or more keywords or assignees to be searched;  
searching the query in Issued Patent or Published Application databases;  
retrieving cited prior art patents for each patent found in search results;  
updating the query by adding assignees from the cited prior art patents;  
running a second search using the updated query; and  
performing a network analysis on the search results.

20. The media of claim 19, further comprising instructions to distribute the processing over a plurality of computers.